

Mr. F. W. Riggenbach has lately sent to the Tring Museum six adult males, one adult female, and two young birds in first plumage of this Wagtail, all from the banks of the Oum Rbiah or Waad Moorbey, from the Mhoiwla, a day's march from Mazagan, to Rahamma. The female differs from the male in being smaller (wing 5 mm. shorter), and in having the crown of the head dark grey with black spots and a black patch in front, just above the white forehead, while the upper throat is mixed with white. The young are like those of *M. alba alba*, but have darker ear-coverts.

The accompanying text-figures represent the heads of a fully adult male of *M. alba subpersonata*, from one of Mr. Riggenbach's specimens (text-fig. 10), and corresponding heads of *M. alba alba* (text-fig. 9) and *M. alba personata* (text-fig. 11).

VII.—*Notes on the East-African Species of Macronyx and Tmetothylacus.* By F. J. JACKSON, C.B., C.M.G.

(Plate III.)

I TRUST that the accompanying notes on the three species of *Macronyx*, one of which is new to science, and also on their near ally, the remarkable *Tmetothylacus tenellus* of Cabanis, found in British East Africa, may prove of interest to readers of the 'Ibis.'

Of the species of *Macronyx*, the largest and at the same time the commonest is *M. croceus*. This fine and conspicuous bird occurs along the coast from Witu to Mombasa and throughout the two Protectorates westward to Uganda. It is particularly plentiful in the Naudi country, at an altitude of 6500 feet, and again at the Eldoma Ravine and on the eastern foot-hills of Mau. It frequents open grass-country interspersed with short scrub and acacia-trees, and is almost invariably found in pairs all the year round. It is very tame and confiding, and is easily approached. It has a short pleasing song, which it warbles forth on the wing, or while

at rest perched on a tree, bush, or ant-hill. Its flight is short and jerky, and when flushed from the ground the bird gets up in a leisurely manner and often remains flitting up and down over the spot with a quivering jerky motion of the wings, at the same time calling in a plaintive voice to its mate hidden in the grass. When disturbed, it almost invariably flies up to a bush or tree, from which it can obtain a good view of the intruder. Its nest is placed under the shelter of a tuft of grass, but in Nandi, where I found many of the birds breeding between April and June in 1898, it was always situated at the foot of a common plant, with large velvety leaves and pretty pink flowers, that abounds on the grassy slopes of the hill-sides. The nest is constructed of dry grass-stems and roots, and is lined with fine grass-rootlets. The eggs are generally three in number. Two specimens in my collection, from near Entebbe in Uganda (May 18th, 1895) are of a pale brownish white, densely freckled, especially towards the larger end, with dullish light red. A third egg from the same clutch is more thinly marked, and has the ground-colour of a clearer white. The measurements of these eggs are 0·8 by 0·65 inch.

Macronyx sharpei (Plate III.), which I had great pleasure in naming after my old friend Dr. Bowdler Sharpe (see Bull. B. O. C. xiv. p. 74), appears to be confined to the higher portions of the great Mau plateau, between 7000 and 8500 feet in elevation. It is readily distinguished from *M. croceus* by the smaller size, the greenish-yellow under surface, and the band of black spots across the lower throat and chest, in place of the distinct black gorget of the latter bird. It also differs considerably in its habits, being entirely confined to the open rolling grass-country devoid of bush and trees, and being found for the most part singly, or only occasionally in pairs. When flushed, it flies straight away for a considerable distance, and always settles again on the ground. I first came across this bird on a cold blustering day in February 1898, on the Mau downs at an altitude of 8700 feet, where I obtained two specimens out of several seen. I then

thought that the birds were on migration, as I had so many times passed the same way without noticing any of them, but I have since found that they are resident. In May 1901 I met with a considerable number of them, for the most part singly, near the railway-station of Londiani at the head of the Nyando Valley (alt. 7500 feet). On the 22nd of the same month I found a nest, from which the old bird rose, placed under a tuft of grass on the side of a low ant-hill, and containing two slightly incubated eggs. The foundation of the nest was composed of grass stems and roots, while it was neatly lined with small fine rootlets.

The eggs are of a very pale greenish white, obscurely mottled with pale yellowish-brown and grey under-markings, most numerous at the larger end. They measure 0·85 by 0·65 inch.

Macronyx wintoni, so far as I have been able to ascertain, is found in three places only—the Rift Valley in the vicinity of Lake Naivasha, the eastern side of the Guashangishu plateau, and the Nyando Valley in the vicinity of Kitotos. I first met with it in the Nyando Valley in Oct. 1889, and obtained two specimens. It was thought to be a new species, and was named by Dr. Bowdler Sharpe ('Ibis,' 1891, p. 444) *M. wintoni*, after the late Sir Francis de Winton, who was at that time Administrator of the Imperial British East Africa Company's territories; but Captain Shelley (B. of Afr. iii. p. 13) considers it to be inseparable from the South-African *M. ameliae*. Even if this be correct, it was certainly an interesting discovery, as the bird has not, I believe, been recorded from either British Central Africa or German East Africa. This remark applies equally to *Chera progne** and *Pyromelana taha*, both of which are found in the Rift Valley. *M. wintoni* is fairly plentiful in the Nyando Valley on the open plains near Kitotos, but may be considered a rare

* Captain Shelley has separated the northern form of this bird as *Chera delamerei* on account of its slightly longer tail (Bull. B. O. C. xiii. p. 73), but refuses specific rank to *Macronyx wintoni*, which has, in my opinion, quite as good claims to that distinction as *Chera delamerei*.

bird in the Rift Valley and on the Guashangishu plateau. It is essentially a bird of the open grassy plains, and is rather wild and difficult to approach; when flushed it will often fly so far that it is exceedingly difficult to mark it down. Its habit, too, of running adds to the difficulty. That it is a resident species, there can, I think, be little doubt, as I have obtained specimens in May, June, August, September, and October, and have seen it near Lake Naivasha in February.

The very remarkable Pipit *Tmetothylacus tenellus* Cab., which has recently led Dr. Madarász to believe that a bird had been brought to light that would "entirely modify the hitherto established principal characteristics of the Order Passeriformes" *, is fairly well distributed throughout British East Africa, though it is a distinctly local species. It is found in the coast-regions both on the mainland of Witu and on Patta Island north of Lamu, and again in Juba-land. I have also seen it in the Baringo district, in the Nyando Valley, and near Taveta. Four specimens were obtained by Mr. A. B. Percival on the upper waters of the river Tsavo, north-east of Kilimanjaro, in 1902. It was at Lake Jipi, some ten to twelve miles south of Taveta, that Mr. Coloman Katona obtained the specimen described by Dr. Madarász, but unless he actually saw the bird wading in the shallow water at the edge of the lake, I very much doubt its being aquatic in its habits. My own experience points to the reverse, as I have invariably found it in open bush-country where the soil is dry and sandy, and at a considerable distance from water. It is generally met with in small family-parties of three or four together, and when flushed almost invariably perches on a bush or small acacia-tree. It is rather wild and by no means easy to approach.

Tmetothylacus with its naked legs is, no doubt, a very abnormal form, but the plumage of the young bird, which is quite Anthine in character, at once shews that its nearest ally is *Anthus*.

* Cf. Ibis, 1904, p. 653.



J.G. Keulemans del et lith.

MACRONYX SHARPEI

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